

# JULIE PÜTTGEN

## Artist's Statement: Recent Paintings

In their craft, my paintings are a reaction to the *immateriality* of our culture. Responding to an avalanche of man-made things whose origins I ignore, I value a clear sense of befriending, praising, and struggling with the material world in my work.

Encaustic painting first came to me as a way of getting my students to think about their paintings from the ground up: cutting and sanding the wood, making the medium, negotiating layers, and gradually finding their way to a real relationship with the tools and processes of image-making. These considerations have also proved to be of real benefit to my own practice as a painter. Wax must be cooked up like a stew, or a drug, and demands care and cunning. If I want a line, I have to know how to ask for one, and also how to be aware of the painting's own suggestions. How about a wild, melting inlay? How about using discarded paint as the foundation of something half-tamed and grand?

My love of line has been focused through my study of Chinese and Tibetan painting in Hong Kong and Dharamsala. Sometimes I use line as ornament, and at other times it exists as an autonomous entity in the landscape. I am part-Swiss, and cut-paper line in the Scherenschnitt ("scissor-cutting") tradition often makes its way into the paintings, either through collage, or in the form of stencils. I am interested in contrasts between what is carefully controlled and what is chaotic or chance-based. In my *Rider Diptychs*, cut-paper figures are set into wild painted proto-landscapes, contrasting precision and chaos, free-form expression and specific narrative.

The beginnings of my paintings hold no certainty as to their ends, and their imagery evolves in response to the demanding, beautiful materials I use. Sometimes overt narratives fall away, leaving the materials themselves to carry the images' content. May my sense of discovery in making the paintings be the seed of the viewer's experience, encountering old stories half-seen at the burnished edges of the world.

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